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SUBJECT: SECURITY ENVIRONMENT PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE (SEPQ)
- SPRING 2008

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Classified By: PHARDING, DCM, REASONS 1.4 (C)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The spring 2008 Security Environmental Profile Questionnaire (SEPQ) reflects continued lack of police resources and EAC concern over a very porous border. The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between Uruguay and the U.S., and the visit of POTUS/SECSTATE in March 2007 also spawned protests.

END SUMMARY

Post EAC provides the following numbered responses to the questions posed in Reftel.

Political Violence

11. (SBU) Demonstrations

1-A. Are there any ethnic or religious communities in country capable of carrying out significant anti-American demonstrations?

A: (S/NF) No, there are no ethnic or religious communities capable of carrying out significant anti-American demonstrations. There are union and political groups that have conducted significant anti-American protests but they do not represent a single ethnic or religious community.

(S/NF) An ethnic/religious group with the potential for anti-American sentiments are the Muslim communities located along the Uruguayan/Brazilian border such as Hizballah, and in the Uruguayan departments of Rivera and Rocha. Some individuals have links to groups in the tri-border region of Argentina/Brazil/Paraguay. However, the diminutive Uruguayan Muslim community maintains a low profile and would be unlikely to conduct public protests in Montevideo against the U.S. They have however conducted protest marches in the border town of Chuy.

1-B. Have there been anti-American demonstrations in the country within the last 12 months?

A: (SBU) Yes, several. Most recently there have been protests against the TIFA, the war in Iraq, and the POTUS/SECSTATE visit.

1-C. Have demonstrations taken place near or in front of U.S. diplomatic facilities?

A: Yes.

1-D. What is the average size of an anti-American demonstration?

A: (SBU) Average size 200. Protests range from 50 to 200 with a high of 5,000. The 5,000 person protest took place in March 2007 in opposition to the POTUS visit to Uruguay.

1-E. Are anti-American demonstrations usually triggered by U.S. foreign policy initiatives, military actions, or by domestic issues?

A: (SBU) The main anti-American demonstrations were triggered by the signing of a TIFA between Uruguay and the U.S. There has also been speculation by some that the U.S. is trying to build a military base in Uruguay. This had lead to "joint" demonstrations against the TIFA and a "Yanki" military base. Other foreign policy initiatives as well as domestic politics also lead to demonstrations. Protests reached their peak during the 2007 POTUS visit.

1-F. Are demonstrations generally violent or peaceful?

A: (SBU) Generally peaceful with graffiti, minor property damage, burning posters or effigies and/or throwing bottles, paint bombs, or fireworks. A small splinter protest, of 200 protesters vandalized some U.S. affiliated businesses (McDonalds) during the March 2007 POTUS visit. In the weeks prior to the POTUS visit, as a form of protest, a Bank of Boston ATM was damaged by an explosive device at 3:00 a.m. No one was injured in this incident.

1-G. If violent, have any demonstrations resulted in damage to USG property or injuries to USG employees?

A: (SBU) No injuries and no significant damage to USG property yet, because police manning barricades prevented protesters from accessing the Chancery perimeter.

1-H. If violent, have any demonstrators ever penetrated our perimeter security line?

A: (C) Improvements have been made to the chancery perimeter, but protestors can get close enough to harass us with paint bombs and similar nuisances. It is nearly impossible to close off all the streets surrounding the Chancery.

1-I. Have there been anti-government demonstrations in the country within the last 12 months?

A: (SBU) Numerous protests against both the city and the national government have taken place.

1-J. Have demonstrations taken place near or in front of U.S. diplomatic facilities?

1A. (SBU) Yes, protests often take place about a mile from the Chancery, near City Hall and one of the main avenues. An obelisk, soccer stadium, and city park across the street from the COMRES are often used as rally points for crowds of thousands. Anti-American protests that take place in the center usually march on the chancery.

1-K. What is the average size of an anti-government demonstration?

A: (SBU) Approximately 50-500.

1-L. Are demonstrations generally violent or peaceful?

A: (SBU) Generally peaceful with graffiti, minor property damage, and some throwing of paint bombs and fireworks. During some protests masked demonstrators engaged in property crimes, smashing windows, throwing bottles, throwing large fireworks, attempting to provoke the police, burning

tires in the street, etc.

1-M. If violent, have any demonstrations resulted in damage to USG property?

A: (SBU) No damage to USG property yet, because police manning barricades prevented protesters from accessing the Chancery perimeter.

12. (SBU) Macro Conflict Conditions

2-A. Is the host country engaged in an interstate or intrastate conflict? (This may include battles between organized and violent drug cartels.)

A: (SBU) No. However, Uruguay and neighboring Argentina have a serious dispute over the construction of wood processing plants on the shared Uruguay River. Greenpeace and Argentine protest groups continue to block bridges and trucks for many weeks at a time. While this is unlikely to evolve into intrastate conflict the situation is serious and problematic.

2-B. If an intrastate conflict, is it an insurgency limited to a specific region or is it a countrywide civil war?

A: (SBU) N/A

2-C. If limited to a specific region, are any U.S. diplomatic facilities located in this region?

A: (SBU) N/A

2-D. Have any of the factions involved in intrastate conflicts signaled or demonstrated an anti-American orientation?

A: (SBU) N/A

13. (SBU) Host Country Capabilities

3-A. Are law enforcement agencies professional and well trained?

A: (S/NF) The Uruguayan National Police are well trained. However the EAC classifies them as minimally professional because severe resource constraints translate into limited effectiveness on the street. The police do not have a sufficient number of patrol vehicles to conduct patrols and/or pursue criminals. Most police officers moonlight from 40-60 hours a week to supplement their marginal salaries of \$150- \$ 200 USD per month. The police have minimal funds for maintenance of existing vehicles, equipment or facilities, and due to endless moonlighting the police are often exhausted.

(C/NF) We do not yet know the exact root cause, but the police are becoming less and less dependable in their manning of previously agreed upon police posts protecting our USG facilities.

(C/NF) Current law heavily favors criminals, making prosecution difficult, and often resulting in same-day release with no charges pressed.

3-B. Have they been trained by U.S. agencies? If so, please elaborate on effectiveness of training.

A: (C/NF) Uruguayan Customs, Immigration, and selected police units (Intelligence, Drugs) have received training from U.S. agencies, however the training has been limited to relatively small groups. We received no INL funds in 2006 or 2007.

3-C. Are law enforcement agencies confronted with serious, widespread corruption inside their agencies?

A: (C/NF) There is some petty corruption at the street level, but the level of known corruption in Uruguay is relatively low when compared with the rest of South America.

3-D. Are the intelligence services professional and capable of deterring terrorist actions?

A: (C/NF) The Uruguayan Intelligence agencies (military and police) are professional and are cooperating with the USG to deter terrorist actions. The police intelligence service is particularly effective and works closely with us and neighboring intel services on intel sharing.

3-E. Have the intelligence services been cooperative with U.S. Embassy requests for information and support?

A: (C/NF) Yes in general.

3-F. Assuming there have been significant terrorist threats in recent years, have host country security services been able to score any major anti-terrorism successes?

A: (SBU) There have been no significant threats.

3-G. Has host country been responsive (re: timeliness and allocation of resources) to embassy requests for protective security?

A: (SBU) Yes.

3-H. How does the embassy assess the overall security at major airports in the country? (excellent, very good, good/average, or poor)

A: (C/NF) Good/Average in Montevideo, poor at small airports in the interior. Since 9/11/01 the Uruguayan government has enlisted the support of Uruguayan Air Force security personnel to screen passengers. They are moderately effective in screening passengers. U.S. carriers also have their own baggage screening programs. However, U.S. carriers have reported deficiencies in screening airport vendors, screening airport personnel and controlling ramp access. Small airports in the interior have minimal to zero security.

3-I. How effective are customs and immigration controls agencies? (effective, average, or ineffective)

A: (SBU) Average at the airport and seaport in Montevideo. Ineffective or non-existent outside of Montevideo. Most of the 985 KM land border between Uruguay and Brazil is completely open.

3-J. How effective are border patrol forces? (effective, average, or ineffective)

A: (SBU) Ineffective. The Uruguayan government controls only major land and sea border crossings. Most of the 985 KM long land border with Brazil is wide open with only sporadic attempts at control and easily avoided fixed checkpoints.

Indigenous Terrorism

14. (SBU) Anti-American Terrorist Groups

4-A. Are there indigenous, anti-American terrorist groups in country?

A: (SBU) No. The only former domestic terrorist group, the Tupamaros, are now affiliated with the ruling political party the "Frente Amplio" or Broad Front.

4-B. If yes, how many? Please name groups.

A: (SBU) N/A

4-C. Have groups carried out anti-American attacks within the last 12 months?

A: (SBU) No.

4-D. Were any of these lethal attacks?

A: (SBU) N/A

4-E. Have groups attacked U.S. diplomatic targets?

A: (SBU) N/A

4-F. Have groups attacked U.S. business, U.S. military, or U.S. related targets?

A: (SBU) Not since the early 1970's when they kidnapped and killed an American Citizen U.S. Embassy employee.

4-G. Have groups limited their attacks to specific regions or do they operate countrywide?

A: (SBU) N/A

4-H. If attacks are limited to regions, are there any U.S. diplomatic facilities located in these regions?

A: (SBU) N/A

15. (SBU) Other Indigenous Terrorist Groups

5-A. Are there other indigenous terrorist groups (not anti-American) in country?

A: (SBU) No.

5-B. If yes, how many? Please name groups.

A: (SBU) N/A

5-C. Have groups carried out attacks in the capital or in areas where U.S. diplomatic facilities are located?

A: (SBU) N/A

5-D. Were attacks lethal and/or indiscriminate?

A: (SBU) N/A

5-E. Have any Americans been killed or injured in these attacks?

A: (SBU) N/A

Transnational Terrorism

16. (SBU) Transnational Terrorist Indicators

6-A. Are there any foreign terrorist groups that have a presence in country? Provide names.

A: (S/NF) Hamas and Hizballah do not have a presence in Uruguay but they do have a permanent presence on the Brazilian side of the Uruguay/Brazilian border and in the tri-border region of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. Some ETA members and many sympathizers reside in Uruguay. Several ETA members have been arrested in Uruguay over the last few years.

6-B. How does post assess this presence? Is it an operational cell? Financial cell? Support cell? Propaganda cell?

A: (S/NF) Post is not aware of functioning operational terrorist cells in Uruguay. However Hamas and Hizballah conduct fundraising and financial operations on the Brazilian side of the Brazil/Uruguay borders.

6-C. Is the host government sympathetic to these groups?

A (C/NF) Post is not aware of the government's views toward

foreign terrorist groups. However the Uruguayan government is partially sympathetic to the governments of Cuba, Iran, Russia and Venezuela, and perhaps China in the future.

6-D. Are there suspect non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country that have a relationship with any of these groups?

A: (SBU) No.

6-E. Are there any ethnic or religious communities in country that are sympathetic to these groups?

A: (S/NF) Yes, there is a small Muslim community located along the 985 KM Uruguayan/Brazilian border, in the Uruguayan departments of Rivera and Rocha. Some estimates put as many as 9 million persons of Middle Eastern extraction living in Southern Brazil. Some may have links to other groups in the tri-border region of Argentina/Brazil/Paraguay.

6-F. How does post assess the level, intent, and scope of hostile intelligence services (Iran, Cuba, Russia, China, Syria, Venezuela, Sudan, et. al.) in country relative to potential anti-American terrorist acts?

A: (S/NF) Venezuela, Cuba, Russia, China and Iran all have a relatively large embassy presence in Uruguay. Some of the officers in these embassies are known hostile intelligence officers. The EAC is aware of the presence of the Iranian Embassy as a potential operations platform for Hizballah activities in the region. The EAC believes that Cuban and Venezuelan intelligence operatives may become more active in the near future. China is possibly making political inroads in Uruguay through donations of technical equipment. The EAC has no known indications of planning for terrorist acts.

6-G. How does post assess the availability of weapons and explosives in country or from nearby countries for hostile terrorist elements?

A: (C/NF) Weapons and explosives are readily available due to the porous 985 KM land borders with Argentina and Brazil. Both Argentina and Brazil manufacture weapons and explosives. Montevideo has a sizable seaport which serves neighboring countries. Small shipments of weapons have been discovered mixed in with legitimate cargo. The potential for weapons or explosives transshipment through Uruguay to/from Paraguay is high. Furthermore Uruguay is a largely agricultural country that utilizes both fertilizers and explosives for farming and mining. These readily available elements have the potential to be used to construct an IED.

(C/NF) Since Paraguay is landlocked almost all container traffic comes through the port of Montevideo, Uruguay. If illegal arms shipments, drugs, counterfeit merchandise are going to or from Paraguay via container odds are that they transited the ports of Colonia and/or Montevideo.

17. (U) Point of contact is RSO William A. Maxwell at Commercial Tel (011) 5982-418-7777 ext. 2319, IVG 818-223-0000, STU x 2190.
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